

**Senior Leadership Team Meeting Hot Topics
Backgrounders for Bob Perciasepe's Visit to Region 9**

Title: San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary (Delta)

Background/Status:

- The Delta is crucial to California's economy yet there is a risk of potential catastrophe because the water supply infrastructure rests on a fragile network of levees.
- The levees surround peat-based islands that have subsided up to 25 feet below sea level.
- Freshwater drawn from the Delta supplies drinking water to 25 million residents, and irrigation water for \$37.5 B agricultural sector.
- If the levees collapse (earthquake, flood), water supplies could be disrupted for years.
- The State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) is pursuing a comprehensive update of the Bay Delta Water Quality Control Plan (WQCP) to protect *beneficial uses*.
- Strengthening the Bay Delta WQCP is EPA's top priority in the Bay Delta Action Plan.
- In 1995, SWRCB did a comprehensive update of the WQCP in response to EPA's promulgation of salinity standards following our disapproval of their salinity objectives.
- EPA proposed protecting fish populations by managing the seasonal position of the "X2" salinity isohaline; a methodology developed by the San Francisco Estuary Project.
- The X2 approach was added to the Bay Delta Accord, and we dropped the promulgation.
- The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) is proposing the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) that would build new water supply infrastructure and restore ~65,000 acres of wetlands. Water agencies would cover the costs of constructing new water intakes and "twin tunnels"; taxpayers would cover the costs of wetlands restoration through voter approved bonds.

Key Points:

- EPA brings a unique perspective and valuable expertise to programs and projects designed to protect water quality, restore wetlands, and safeguard ecosystems.
- The agency faces three major decision points over the next several years:
 - (1) approval/disapproval of SWRCB's Bay Delta WQCP per CWA §303.
 - (2) potential adverse rating of the NEPA document for the BDCP.
 - (3) potential permit elevation of the Public Notice issued by the Corps for the BDCP.
- DWR expects to release the DEIS for the BDCP by **Nov. 15th** (90-day review period).
- DWR and its consultants have been preparing the EIS with reactive input from *lead agencies* (NMFS, USBR, USFWS) and *cooperating agencies* (Corps, EPA); it appears that they will not address many of the concerns raised by the agencies in July 2013.
- CEQ has been actively engaged in the development of the BDCP.
- There is an ongoing need for close coordination internally between Region 9, OECA, OGC, and OW on both the BDCP and the Bay Delta WQCP.
- We are working closely with technical staff and decision-makers at the SWRCB to build a strong, defensible, and approvable Bay Delta WQCP.
- We are leveraging our San Francisco Bay Water Quality Improvement Fund to advance projects across the region to improve water quality and the resiliency of the ecosystem.

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